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THROUGH THE TREES
By Frank Townsend Hutchens

Exhibition of Paintings by Frank Townsend Hutchens

By AGNES GERTRUDE RICHARDS

IN THE past so many phases of art have been colored with a tinge of melancholy that the cheerful, wholesome tendencies of modern landscapes become particularly pleasing through contrast. Our landscape art today is not that of men who see Nature from a window, but of fresh air enthusiasts who love outdoor life. In it there is much of the feeling of the caressing enveloping atmosphere all about us; the warmth of the sun and the coolness of shade, the trembling of a passing breeze. With all these, too, comes Nature's

language of peace and tranquillity. Like the great mother herself, the spirit of these paintings "steals into our darker musings with a mild and healing sympathy."

Among the most brightening and cheering of recent exhibitions was that of the works of Frank Townsend Hutchens at the Chicago galleries of Henry Reinhardt from February 16th to 29th. About the walls were large landscapes of the modern school, generally representing the charms of New England, bright and big with the genius of America, and



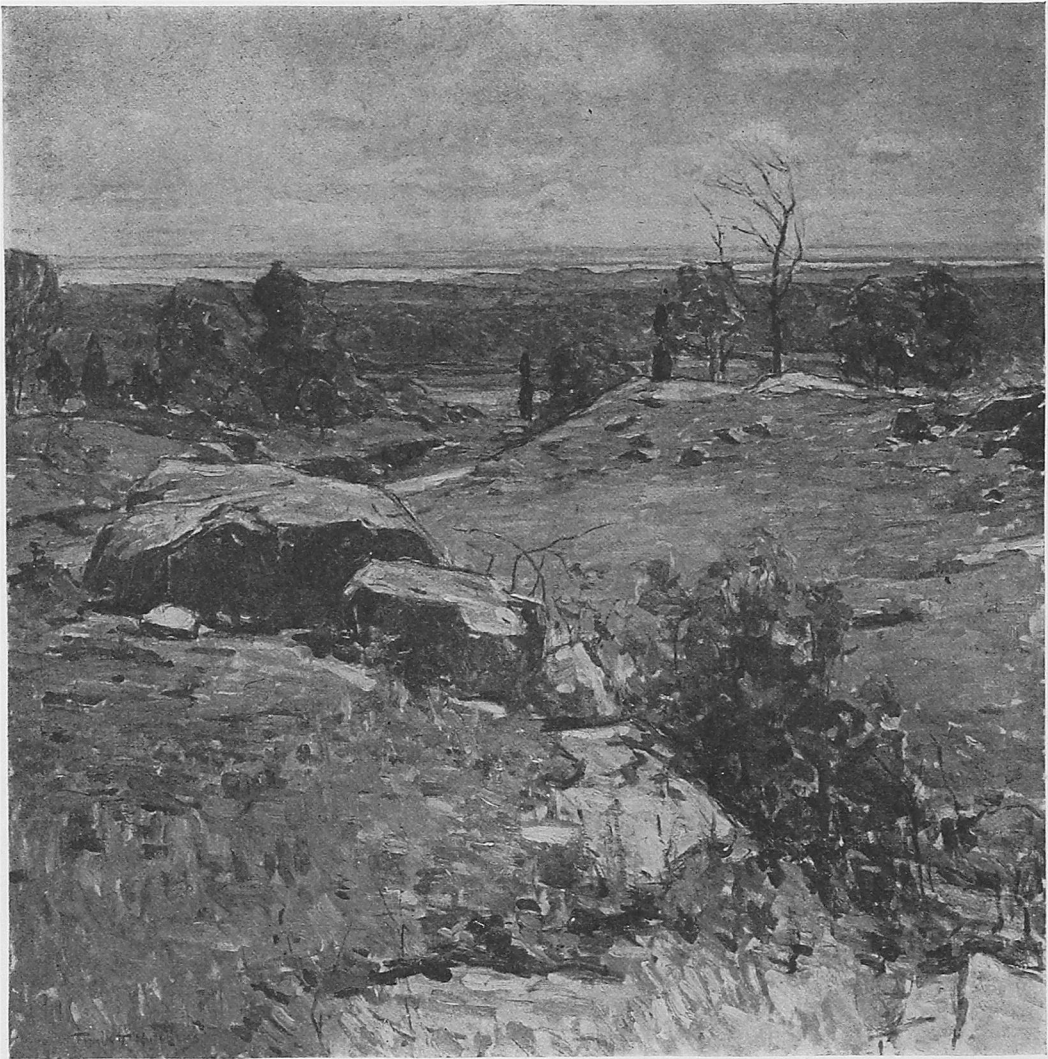
ON THE HILLTOP
By Frank Townsend Hutchens

smaller ones of Mr. Hutchens' Picardy period, softened by the greys of sea mists and poetic with the Barbizon spirit.

It was indeed most interesting to trace the development of style through the ten years that separated these two periods. One found, however, "no best in kind but in degree," for each method was justified by its results. "Twilight," "A French Village" and "An Abandoned Boat" were among the most charming of the earlier works. The latter, while poetic in tone, was executed in a big, sweeping way. Brushed in with broad strokes it yet produced,

at a slight distance, a fine velvety effect. The romantic quality, innate in the subject, was fully realized through appropriate handling. This sea-coast country, where the old boat attracted the eye of the artist, is now the camping ground of Kitchener's army, and Mr. Hutchens' house and studio at Trepied have been given over for temporary hospital purposes.

"Twilight" is another of the Picardy landscapes which has been very well liked and perhaps nothing of Mr. Hutchens' first period could offer better contrast with his later works,



HUCKLEBERRY HILL
By Frank Townsend Hutchens

especially with such a canvas as "November," a study of New England woods, painted with the intent of catching all the light that filled the great outdoors on a bright day of late autumn. This was a brilliant, crisp, sparkling picture even against the crimson brocade walls of the gallery. On the neutral wall of a well-appointed home it would be a veritable spot of sunlight.

One of the most brilliant achievements in this collection was "Huckleberry Hill," here-with illustrated. Even in the black and white we feel the subtle design of its arrangement

of masses. It seems composed to suggest a delightful pattern, and yet it is faithful to Nature and natural forms. For, though certain masses are almost outlined in order to give importance, there is no sacrifice of truth. This leading toward a marked design, is one of the notable tendencies of the best of our modern art. Here is it combined with luminosity and all the colorful joyousness of Autumn in crimson and gold. The vivid red of the clumps of foliage of the bushes which pattern the hillside is such as the sumac, maple and scrubby oak take on under the touch of

frost. They give a lively impression that is most agreeable to the senses.

"Spring Morning," on the other hand, had apparently been painted for the delicacy of the light of a morning in May, with its myriad reflections from fresh, green, dew-gleaming leaves. The envelope of atmosphere over the scene softened all this sparkle, imparting an opalescent quality which completed the illusion of tender, tremulous light. Even in such works, however, the artist preserves very carefully certain limits of form, showing an understanding of the decorative use of large masses similar to that of the Chinese and Japanese.

Landscapes wherein a figure has a supreme, a secondary or an equal interest, are another important phase of Mr. Hutchens' art. He handles the figure outdoors with considerable skill in any of these relations to nature. One of his most successful paintings of this type is "On the Hilltop," a study of a fine, strong, noble type of American girl in all the freshness and joyousness of youth and morning, fair as the promise of the dawn. [See illustration.] Here the figure and its surroundings equally divide attention, a pattern also has been preserved throughout and one feels the atmosphere all about each object. The figure has been outlined to give strength, though in such a way as still to preserve delicacy in the tone of the garments, which are almost the hue of the skyey background. In her hand the young woman carries a basket and before her is a bed of vivid red poppies, nodding and

drooping in the misty morning light. This picture suggested to one of our noted Chicago connoisseurs Clinton Scollard's poem entitled "Morning."

"Through the trees," herewith reproduced, is a work of about two years ago showing the broad style of Mr. Hutchens' present method, but not so vivid in color as many of his late pictures. It is, however, most satisfactory in tone and produces the feeling of faraway charm, luring our interest toward the mysterious distance. Only one winter scene graced the collection, for the artist spends his winters in the city, and it is during the summer months in his home near Norwalk, Conn., that he gathers inspiration for most of his landscapes. One of Mr. Hutchens' winter pictures has been purchased by the Herron Art Institute and, "A Frozen Brook," included in this exhibition, proves his ability to paint snow in such a manner as to please critics and fellow artists.

Even in his winter pictures, however, nature still appears inviting. There is nothing in them of the bleak or desolate. Like his studies of other seasons, they tell of a wholesome love of life and a joy in the outdoor world and its beauties. They fulfill the great purpose of landscape art, that of teaching us to see through discriminating eyes the charms of the world that are about us, and, guided by these recorded impressions of fleeting beauty, to go forth with an enlarged vision upon our rambles or our vacations seeing things in nature that we may have missed before.